

Ford Site Planning Task Force
March 20, 2007
Lumen Christi Catholic Church

Public Meeting #1 Summary

The meeting was called to order by co-chair Carole Faricy at 6:35 PM. Mrs. Faricy introduced Ward 3 Councilmember Patrick Harris. Mr. Harris stated that the City Council and Planning Commission formed the Ford Site Planning Task Force, and recognized some members in the audience. He said that this large community meeting was a way to reach out to the neighbors, and that it would involve break-out groups, instead of a public hearing format. He stated that the role of the task force would involve devising strategies for the best possible reuse of the land, and that this was an opportunity for the neighborhood.

Bill Vitek, lead of the consultant team headed by EDAW, discussed how Ford site planning would be a process of narrowing broad ideas to a series of alternative development scenarios, and not result yet in any one design solution. Mr. Vitek stated that the approximately 125-acre site represents a unique opportunity, and that successful planning for it cannot happen in a vacuum, requiring community input to ensure planning efforts are on the correct path. He reviewed the involved parties, remarking that PED (the City's Department of Planning and Economic Development) was the client, that Ford Motor Co. had a representative on the task force, and that the Port Authority would be employing a consultant to look at potential reuses from a market perspective. A developers' panel would also assist the task force in analyzing the various development scenarios from a market perspective. A Technical Advisory Group of city, state, and other agencies would also be meeting concurrently to discuss technical implications of the potential reuses, and help support the process with technical expertise. Ford would be hiring Arcadis to do an environmental assessment of the site, starting with a phase 1 assessment (to be completed by the late spring). Mr. Vitek also discussed how the process would have two parts, phase one consisting of scenario development, going through June 2007, and phase two consisting of a fiscal impact analysis and Alternative Urban Area-wide Review, from July 2007-April 2008.

Mr. Vitek reviewed the proposed list of core stakeholders, each to be interviewed by the consultant team over the next month for input. Issues identified to date consisted of Access/Services, Development, Economics, Natural Resources, Participatory Planning, Public Amenities, Sustainability, and Views/Vistas. A vision statement would be crafted by the task force, consisting of a short statement that is utilized to guide the ultimate development of a project/place, and answering the question "What do we want this place to be?" Goals would be established within planning process categories to help organize and focus ideas, and objectives would provide guidance on how to meet a goal, and be the intermediary statement to a specific or a series of specific actions to be taken to implement the goals. Goal planning categories drafted for the Ford site included "Character and Built Form," "Community Amenities and Open Space," "Land Use," "Economic Viability," "Policy," "Sustainability," and "Transport and Infrastructure Connectivity."

Next, Mr. Vitek began the preliminary assessment of the site to date, including a discussion of its key location along the Mississippi River, and the hydro dam. He and consultant team members presented maps of the area's land uses, current zoning, critical area overlay boundaries, Minneapolis-St. Paul Airport Zoning Overlay, water service, sewer lines, electric/utilities, and gas service. Lastly, he introduced the break-out group exercise, in which he asked the public to identify major issues, opportunities, and constraints for the site. He asked the public to envision the site in 2020, asking the meeting attendees to identify the key potential land uses for the site, as well as the land uses that "would not be missed."

The meeting adjourned at 8:29 PM.

Ford Planning Project – Public Meeting #2, March 20, 2007

Summary of Break-out Table Comments by Topic

Green Manufacturing

- Wind turbine manufacturing opportunity
- Local jobs for residents
- Green energy manufacturer
- Green manufacturing is the future

Hydro Power

- Hydro Plant
- Hydro Power - free energy
- Hydro plant – power development on the site
- Keep hydro attached?
- Keep connection of power plant to the site
- Keep power plant & integrate into green industry (windmill blades etc)
- Breaking it away will reduce interest
- Hydro & site – why sold separately? Keep as one, with green manufacturing opportunity.
- Future – energy resources declining
- Why the “rush” to separate hydro & site? Ford had a great vision; site is self-sustaining.
- City should acquire hydro-plant; District Energy; Latimer involvement?
- Sustainable Industry - connection/synergy with hydro plant

Retail

- Meet retail needs
- Different businesses / independents are important
- Avoid “Big Box” stores
- What can't you get in Highland? Not Rainbow or Home Depot - that's Ok!!
- Add new grocery store
- Local, small amenities / businesses
- Should the retail get closer to the river along Ford?
- Preserve existing local businesses
- Commercially viable
- More coffee shops, etc
- Restaurant on river

Residential

- Universal home – provide for 3 generations
- Life cycle housing
- Baby boomers (aging pop)
- For aging pop
- Different housing types, including work-live units
- Affordable housing with compatible green space and some yards
- Affordable single family, town homes, and some medium price range senior housing
- Add residential
- Too much bias toward residential development
- Last preference for land use – housing
- No McMansions
- Do not line river road lined w/ McMansions
- Need for housing in City? Actual demand in City?

Industry / Manufacturing / Office

- Use has history and is loss to community. Keep manufacturing on site?
- Keep jobs in area
- What happens to jobs?
- Jobs important
- Jobs a priority

- Job creation - ancillary impacts
- Quality job creation
- Sustainable family jobs
- Jobs retention - good paying
- Future use – family – supporting jobs. Concern about jobs being lost.
- Fear loss of industry and tax base; get manufacturing jobs back
- Economic implication – loss of 2,000 jobs
- Light rail manufacturing (parts/inputs)
- Wind turbines, hybrid vehicles
- Light Industrial use
- Find a new manufacturer – or ring with residential
- Why not Toyota?
- Great industrial use potential due to power and river (enough housing and retail)
- Opportunities for colleges – St. Thomas...Like U of MN site – reuse of buildings for educational purposes.
- Combine education & green technology production
- Business Incubator - partner with colleges
- Industrial reuse as research/development campus w/ hydro link and greener
- Look at smaller industrial uses
- Economically viable use options – green manufacturing is long-term
- Historic designation of assembly building? Reuse opportunities for building?

Mix of Land Uses

- Mixed use
- Mixed use
- Include mix of uses – industry; single-family; multi-family; retail; recreation
- Mixing uses is more sustainable!
- Population mix of ages and cultures is more stable and sustainable
- Lifecycle uses - schools to retirement homes
- Industry, retail, housing can co-exist
- Educated work force = resource; can have small business and housing
- Concern about high density – prefer variety / less dense options
- Housing & manufacturing mix – railcar, LRT manufacturing?
- Start over w/ new development mixed uses – shopping, office, housing
- Land use – doors are open: manufacturing (dream – Wind); open/recreational/public space; Twins ballpark; institutional use
- If new residential, is there school infrastructure?
- Schools
- School/university campus
- Students with transportation to campuses

Green Design / Sustainability

- Improve water quality
- Renewable energy requirement - use dam, wind energy
- Clean energy production
- Carbon Footprint - industrial use & hydro is low; residential & retail is high
- Think ahead 80 years – wind turbines, green manufacturing
- Local production for local consumption
- Sustainable site design – innovation; geothermal, etc.
- Opportunity for ground source heat
- Environmental sustainability
- Energy/Sustainability – Mines; Hydro link; Footprint; Solar; Carbon
- Manufacture green building sites
- Energy efficient technology

Urban Design / Quality of Development

- Extend surrounding pattern of Highland Park into the site
- Make it part of the Highland Neighborhood (blend in)

- Preserve local character
- Community fit - compatible architectural design
- New development as innocuous and non-invasive
- Height? What works for different uses?
- Density and height issues - maintain views
- Views of sunrise/sunset
- Include gathering spaces on blocks
- Connect to central business area
- Create urban neighborhood (in our "City of Neighborhoods")
- Architectural character important
- Most valuable land is along river road
- Non-profit use – concern about removal from property tax rolls
- Do not do a planned look
- No Disney land – no high rises
- Small town feel
- Keep small town feel!

Parks / Recreation / Open Space

- Green space important
- Maintain green space
- Environment
- Environmental opportunities
- Public space – parks (active/passive parks)
- Public land important – park / innovations
- Preserve & expand recreational opportunities/resources
- Include publicly accessible green spaces - natural lake, maybe for fishing
- More green space – closer to river
- Gorgeous land – piece along river not developed
- Can there be direct access from the site to the river? This is valuable waterfront property "More traffic in BWCA than in the valley"
- Natural resources/beauty corridor ½ of site in MNRRA
- River is major – what happens to hidden falls etc.
- New parks/open space above bluff; build on Mississippi River Blvd space
- Maybe relocate Mississippi River Blvd back for more public park land
- Little League Fields
- Little League – next to high rise
- Preserve or enhance Little League fields & softball
- Little League field's (designate new space)
- Save the Little League Field or reconfigure
- Ball fields important
- Maintain trail system
- Place to walk, sit, relax, exercise (e.g. Como Park)
- Multi-use recreational
- Water feature/Garden/Parks
- Museum/Legacy to site's history
- Art museum/other art/theatre

Traffic / Roads / Parking

- Transportation a big issue
- Roads & transportation demands
- Existing plant use has minimal traffic impact, new development will have greater
- Need to improve vehicular circulation - improve congestion by having alternative routes and improve parking system
- Transportation access important
- Traffic
- Traffic
- Traffic
- Traffic, Parking

- Traffic - shift end
- What can be put on site that won't choke off traffic arteries?
- Not high density – too much traffic
- Traffic - residential or retail will both add to traffic; regional plan for ground transport
- Should some streets continue into the land?
- Add Park & Ride facility
- Good parking needed
- Change name of Blvd?
- Speed bumps for all
- Traffic & changing transport
- Lack of traffic alternatives
- Developed roads & grown tree-lined boulevards
- River road – maintain public access
- Don't move River road
- Utilities are not under main streets

Transit / Alternative Modes

- Reduce auto dependency
- Non-motorized
- Incorporate transit
- Transportation – Traffic flow, transit, pedestrian, bus, LRT
- Dangerous now for bicycles; design for safe bicycle circulation
- Railroad Track - Impact on stability of neighborhoods; How will the track be used?
- Keep rail line for industrial use
- Rail corridor as opportunity – trail or transit
- Rail line – status? Could it be LRT connection to Hiawatha line 46th St. station?
- Light rail for Canada Pacific Rail corridor
- Faster connection to regional transit network w/parallel bike trail LRT
- Train noise is a problem and concern
- Pedestrian oriented important
- Enhance current walkable environment
- Pedestrian, multi-model friendly
- Make connections to Central Business District other than autos
- Proximity & access to city core & resources
- Transportation infrastructure key

General Ideas / Opportunities

- Need to think long term – (housing quick return but green manufacturing may yield more in the long term)
- Site's function currently – role played in community (Past...Future)
- Be a visionary...don't squander
- Look to future, not past
- Think regional, not just local
- Think bigger than condos & coffee shops
- Look at trends – viability
- Tax Base Generation - economic activity
- No matter what goes here, improve the status quo
- Something special, unique
- Community
- Community!!
- Do the right thing for the future
- Clear site & build new
- Have public \$ money to make it right
- Bring back model T or A

General Concerns / Constraints

- Contamination under the site??
- Clean up issues

- Environmental assessment – land contamination?
- Cost to clean up? What's going into the river?
- Environmental – pollution, contamination
- Environmental cleanup?
- Don't "think too small"
- "Once in a lifetime" vs. "Rush" to sell – Use 50 and 100 year outlooks, not just current profit margin
- Don't rush process
- Huge market for wind power...MN could be a leader
- Will Ford do what we want?
- Ford's "best interest" is a concern
- Unknown interests
- What will impact be on property taxes?
- Highland Mac/Grove tax burden
- What is financial impact on St. Paul?
- Tax revenue (balance?)
- Highland unique – don't destroy land values – look of neighborhood
- City objectives? Maximum tax revenue goal good or bad?
- Density - how will it affect neighborhood height of buildings?
- Overlay zoning or guidelines – might be too constraining
- \$ Cost
- \$ Cost
- Risk of mediocrity with high number of stakeholders
- Public acceptance of plan
- Lack of labor incorporation on Task Force a concern
- Mines/tunnels – what happens to them?
- Vacant Site/Blight
- Legislation on holding land for 2 years
- Coordinated developers -- not!
- Too few developers - ↑ cost need competition
- Airport restrictions (what can be there?)
- Neighborhood turnover